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In all major civilizations of the world art has been one of the primary media through which the creative urge and genius of the people have been succinctly expressed. The term art is so comprehensive in its connotation that it includes in its fold different fields of human enterprise. But in our consideration here its meaning is restricted to the fields of architecture, sculpture and painting, the three main channels through which both the artistic mastery and profound philosophical truths of ancient India have been expressed. The Tamil country, has been throughout the successive historical periods, the meeting ground of many an artistic motif, design and norm so much so that in her sculptural and architectural contributions the harmonious blending of diverse regional idioms are manifestly evident. It is not possible to recount in entirety the history of the development of Tamil art from its evolutionary beginnings to its consummation and final exhaustion within the limited time at our disposal; what is attempted here is only a panoramic survey of the salient features of Tamil art. It is necessary here to point out that the name Tamilnad in our discussion does not mean the modern State of Madras but refers to the areas under the cultural hegemony of Tamil—the area roughly corresponding to large parts outside it, and adjoining it.

Before sketching in outline the evolution of architecture it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the major types of extant structures. These basic shapes are fivefold, viz., square (*caturaśra*), rectangular (*ayataśra*), elliptical (*vrittayata*), circular (*vritta*) and octagonal (*aṣṭaśra*). Generally speaking the plan of the temple was conditioned by the nature of the consecrated deity. The shrine of the reclining Ranganatha, for example, can only be rectangular. The basic shapes are amply reflected in the super structure of the *vimāna*. Though square and rectangular shrines are frequently met with,

circular and octagonal shapes are very rare. However these forms are represented in the *śikhara* of the *vimāna*. The apsidal form, a derivative from Buddhist architecture, was popular up to the 10th century in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam after which it declined in usage.

Mention should also be made here of the temples which have more than one shrine in the vertical order. This is to be found in a handful of Vaiṣṇava temples as those at Kāñcipuram, Uttiramērūr, Madurai, Tirukkōṣṭiyūr etc. Three shrines, one above the other, are found in these and are intended for the seated, standing and reclining forms of Viṣṇu.

Unlike other parts of India the architectural history of the Tamil country starts only with the beginning of the seventh century A.D., the monuments built before that period having perished. In early Tamil literature we hear of such structures as *kōyil, māḍam, nagaram, paḷḷi, pāḷi*, etc., which are apparently references to temples or religions edifices. Presumably they were built of impermanent materials which have succumbed to the ravages of time.

The earliest extant monuments in the Tamil country are the rock-cut caves scooped out under the Pallavas, and following them by the Pāṇḍyas, Muttaraiyars, and Atiyas. In his inscription in the cave of Lakṣitāyatana at Maṇḍagappaṭṭu, South Arcot district Mahēndravarman I (610–630 A.D.) declares that he caused the construction of the temple for Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā without the use of conventional building materials like brick, timber, metal and mortar; and the tenor of the language has been taken to indicate that the king was introducing a new mode of architecture by scooping out the cave. Many other cave temples are definitely attributable to Mahēndravarman on the authority of his inscriptions in them. These include the excavations at Pallāvaram, Mahendravāḍi, Māmaṇḍūr, Tiruchirāpaḷḷi, Siyamaṅgalam and Dalavānūr. The Vasantēśvaram at Vallam was also excavated in Mahēndravaraman's reign by a feudatory of his. Besides these caves of definite authorship, those at Kuranganilmuṭṭam, Viḷappākkam, Aragaṇḍanallūr and the Rudravāliśvara cave at Māmaṇḍūr are stylistically attributable to the period of Mahēndravarman. These caves of Mahēndra are simple in plan and consist of a *maṇḍapa*

with one or a few shrines. The sculptural decoration of the caves is inconspicuous. The pillars in them are equidistant and have square sections both on base and top with the portion in between chamfered octagonally. In the square section are seen delicate carvings of lotus medallions. The pillars and pilasters carry on top massive corbels with beams.

This 'Mahēndra style' was continued by his son and successor Māmalla, the famous Narasimhavarman I, who, however, introduced certain variations in some of his caves. In these the entablature is almost completely finished unlike in those of the Mahēndra variety. Besides *kūḍu* arches in the cornice, it carries *śālas*, *karnakūṭas* and *alpanāsikas*. The pillars in Māmalla's caves are not only taller but also slender than those of his father. The strutting figure of a lion or *vyāla* as the base of the pillar is a notable feature. Again in Māmalla's caves one can also find large bas-reliefs on walls in striking contrast to their plain nature in all but one of Mahēndra's caves. The Konērimaṇḍapam, Varāhamaṇḍapam, Mahiṣāmardanimaṇḍapam, Trimūrti cave, Ādivarāha cave, Rāmānujamaṇḍapam, etc.—all at Mahābalipuram—are typical examples of the Māmalla types of rock architecture.

The Paṇḍyas, who were ruling in the extreme south of the Tamil country, appear to have soon adopted the rock-cut technique and developed certain interesting variations in their excavations. It is possible that the cave at Piḷḷaiyārpaṭṭi is one of the earliest Pāṇḍya attempts in the rock medium as evidenced by the archaic palæography of the inscription in Vaṭṭeḷuttu characters in it. The Śiva cave shrine at Malaiyaḍikurichi is assignable on the basis of an inscription to the second half of the seventh century and the Narasimha cave at Ānamalai and the Subrahmaṇya cave at Tirupparankuṉṟam are on the same ground datable respectively to 770 to 773 A.D. At Tiruttangal, Pirānmalai, Kuḍumiyāmalai and Sittannavāsal are to be found other caves of the Pāṇḍyas. Though similar with Pallava caves in plan and design the Pāṇḍya examples differ from them in their adoption of certain Cāḷūkyan features such as the introduction of the rock-cut *linga* and Nandi and sculptural representations of Gaṇeśa and Saptamātṛkas. The pillars are large and remniscent of those of the Mahēndra

variety with corbels generally with a plain level. In this movement of scooping out live rocks for divine abodes minor dynasties like the Atiyas and Muttaraiyars also participated, though stylistically, their excavations are much akin to those of their political masters. The cave at Nāmakkal is evidently an Atiya enterprise while Muttaraiya hand may be seen at Tiruveḷḷarai, Nārttāmalai, Kuṉṉāṇḍārkōil etc.

Under Narasimhavarman I Pallava, rock-architecture took a new turn. Besides cutting into rocks for caves, attempts were made to cut-out monoliths out of rocks. The rudiments of this practice are to be found in the carved-out stupas in the caves of Western India and the *vimāna*-form in the Tawa cave at Udayagiri but it was at Mahābalipuram under the Pallavas that it found a full and eloquent expression. Architecturally they depict the external aspects of contemporary brick and timber structures. There are as many as nine monoliths at Mahābalipuram of which the five, named after the Pāṇḍavas and Draupadi, are a wellknown assemblage of continguous excavations, the other examples are the Gaṇeśa ratha, Valayankuṭṭai ratha and the two Piḍāri rathas. As they represent varying architectural designs they are of primary importance for any study of the plan and different zones and the details of the *vimānas*. The Dharmarāja-ratha is three-storeyed with a square *vimāna* and an octagonal dome. Though the Arjunaratha is similar to this it is two-storeyed. The Bhīmaratha has a wagon-top roof and is single-storeyed unlike the Gaṇeśa ratha, another example of wagon-top roof, which is double-storeyed. The Draupadiratha is hut-shaped and is square in plan and its roof is domical. The Sahādevaratha represents the apsidal form with its back resembling that of an elephant, a feature high lighted by the carving of a huge elephant by the side of the monolith. The only non-Pallava monolith in the Tamil country is Kaḷugumalai which was cut-out under the Pāṇḍyas. This has been cut out, like the Rāṣṭrakūṭa monoliths in the Deccan, by entrenching all round and not by free cutting of standing rocks as in the Pallava domain.

Though the rock medium appear to have continued for some more time it was soon replaced by structural temples. This movement, as available evidences indicate, appear to have first started under Narasimhavarman I's grand-son Paramēśvaravarman (669–691 A.D.)

though it is not unlikely that the practice was still older. A few pillars in the typical Mahēndra style, one of them with an inscription of Mahēndravarman I, found in the Ekāmranātha temple at Kāñcipuram seem to suggest that even at the beginning of the seventh century structural *maṇḍapas* were built. The presence of Pallava pillars at Śivanvāyil, Kūram, Vāyalūr, Tiruppōrūr etc. is enough to confirm this.

The Vidyavinīta Pallaveśvaragriha at Kūram built by Paramеśvaravarman I is an early structural edifice. The provision of a series of vertical and horizontal slabs instead of a full *bhitti* is an interesting and early feature in this temple. While this is a small temple and reflects the modest nature of the enterprise, the temples of the next reign are large in size, elaborate in plan and rich in architectural and sculptural decorations. With the accession of Narasimhavarman II Rājasimha the history of Pallava architecture enters upon a new and eventful phase. While the temples of Kailāsanātha at Kāñcipuram, Tālagirīśvara at Panamalai and the Shore temple at Mahābalipuram are indisputably assignable to his reign on epigraphical grounds, a large number of other smaller temples are also stylistically akin to them. The temples of Vaikuṇṭanātha, Mukteśvara and Mātangeśvara at Kāñcipuram are said to be slightly later and belong to the reign of Nandivarman Pallavamalla.

The Kailāsanātha is four-storeyed and is an example of *sāndhara-prāsāda* containing two walls providing an ambulatory. The storeys are decorated with architectural designs like *kūṭas, koṣṭas* and *pañjaras*. The pillars in structural temples are with rampant lions generally and with elephants, *nāgas* and *bhūtas* at times. Niches are to be seen in both the rock-cut and structural temples and have a *makaratoraṇa* decoration on their top, the *makaras* in them having floriated tails overflowing on the sides. The corbels are generally curved in profile with the *taranga* (wave moulding) ornament and a median band. The *gopuras* are absent in these early temples. In the Kailāsanātha at Kāñci and the Shore Temple at Mahābalipuram there are faint but unmistakable suggestions of *gopuradhvāras* which were to evolve into towers. Another feature of these early structural temples is the almost prodigal sculptural embellishment of the exterior walls. The carvings

are invariably those of deities, a few of which appear to be fresh inceptions from the Cāḷūkyan area.

The Cōḷas who supplanted the Pallavas about the middle of the ninth century as a political force continued the latter's artistic activities. For about five centuries a large part of the Tamil country besides peripheral regions in contiguous areas in Āndhra, Karnāṭaka and Keraḷa were under their sway which they studded with hundreds of temples. On the basis of certain accepted nótions regarding the evolution of temple architecture and on the authority of numerous inscriptions it is now fairly possible to determine the dates of most of the Cōḷa monuments. Though the periodisation of South Indian art-history is even now a subject of debate it is conceded by most scholars that the Cōḷa temples are broadly divisible into three groups : the first group belonging to the period from the accession of Vijayālaya to the accession of Rājarāja I (*i.e.*, 850–985 A.D.) ; the second group assignable to the period from the accession of Rājarāja I to the accession of Kulōttunga I (985–1070 A.D.) ; and the third group comprising the period from the accession of Kulōttunga I to the decline and fall of the Cōḷa empire under Rājarāja III and Rājendra III (1070–1270 A.D.).

The temples of the first group are many which in stylistic characteristics break away from the structural temples of the Pallavas. In the Pallava temples the lowermost tier of the *vimāna* is extended to the vestibule in front of the shrine while this is not found in early Cōḷa temples, the only exception being the Vijayālayacōḷiśvaram at Nārttāmalai, which according to recent researches is not a Cōḷa but a Muttaraiya edifice. The torus moulding in the basement which is chamfered in Pallava temples continues to be so in the Cōḷa period for sometime but soon gets a rounded shape. The cornice in Cōḷa temples is no longer a projecting tier as it is in Pallava monuments but gets a flexed shape. The old lion and *vyāla* motifs in pillars are also dispensed with though they linger for sometime in a few temples. Further the corbels in pillars get an angular profile and are bevelled resulting in a triangular tenon-like projection. The absence of extravagant sculptural decoration on the exterior of the shrine walls is another distinguishing feature.

Though typical early Cōḷa examples are numerous special mention must be made of those at Kiḷaiyūr, Śrīnivāsanallur, Kumbhakōṇam, Erumbūr, Pullamangai, Puñjai and Koḍumbāḷūr. The introduction of subshrines for attendant divinities (*parivāra-dēvatas*) noticed in these temples reveal the elaboration and development of the temple complex. In fact the beginnings of this practice are to be discerned even in the latter Pallava temple of Vīraṭṭānesvara at Tiruttaṇi built under Aparājita. This temple, though Pallava in name, in Cōḷa in design and style and chronologically almost coeval with some of the Cōḷa monuments enumerated above. The *parivāra* shrines, usually eight in number, were meant for attendent deities like Gaṇeśa, Subrahmaṇya, Sūrya, Candra, Saptamātṛkas, Jyeṣtha, Caṇḍikeśvara and Nandi. The *gōpuras* of this period continue to be inconspicuous, the *vimānas* dominating the temple complex. Generally speaking temples built under Āditya and Parāntaka contained only three niches in the shrine walls, one on each wall, and two niches in the walls of the *ardhamaṇḍapa* again one on each wall. While the niches in the southern and northern walls of the *ardhamaṇḍapa*, carried respectively carvings of Gaṇeśa and Durga, those of the main shrine were intended for Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Brahmā. The niche in the rear wall offered scope for variation the enshrined deity being either Lingodhbhava or Viṣṇu, Harihara or Ardhanārīśvara. But even in two very early temples—those at Srinivasanallur and Kumbhakōṇam—the tendency to multiply the niches is found, the additional niches carrying what looks like portraits. This tendency has been developed in the temples built by Sembiyan Mahādevi, mother of Uttamacōḷa at such places as Tirukkōḍikkāval, Sembiyan Mahādevi, Ānāngūr, Āduturai, Tirunaraiyūr, Kuttālam, etc., where the additional niches carry such iconographic types as Naṭarāja, Bhikṣāṭana and Ardhanāri besides Agastya.

These early Cōḷa architectural traditions are carried to those of the later Cōḷa period by the temples built under the illustrious Rājarāja and his son Rājēndra. Many are the extant examples assignable to this middle phase, the most famous among them being the Brihadiśvara temples at Tanjore and Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōḷapuram. Other temples of this period are those at Tiruvaḍi, Mēlpāḍi, Tiruvalaṇjuḷi, Tirumalavāḍi, Tiruvaranguḷam, Dādāpuram, etc. In most of these temples the basement is ornamented with pilasters which carry a cornice. The walls

have a greater number of niches and a semi-circular arch (*tiruvācci*) the centre of which is identical with that of the *kūḍū* which appears beneath the architrave and over the niche. The introduction of the *kumbhapañjara* in between the niches is another feature.

The Tanjore temple is undoubtedly the grandest achievement of the age. It was more a monument of triumph than a strict example of temple architecture. It is in this temple that one notices for the first time two *gōpuras* oriented in the same direction. They are architecturally coeval with the main *vimāna* and are referred to in inscriptions as *Rājarājan tiruvāśal* and *Keraḷāntakan tiruvāśal*. In spite of the massive size of the *gōpuras* the *vimāna*, rising majestically to a height of 190 feet, continues to dominate and it is only in the subsequent period that a change in the gradation of magnitude takes place.

The multiplication of *parivāra* shrines and the introduction of a separate shrine for the goddess are the two significant changes in the temple complex effected during this period. Even in the Tanjore temple the Devi shrine is not contemporaneous with the main cella but was built later. The earliest Devi shrine which appears to be definitely chronologically coeval with the main shrine is the one at Gaṅgaikoṇḍacōḷapuram. The Devi shrines, known as *Tirukkāmak-kōṭṭams*, were thus largely a feature from the reign of Rājēndra.

In the temples representing the final phase of Cōḷa architecture a discernible maturity of style is evident. Notable examples of them are to be found at Dārāsuram, Tribhuvanam, Chidambaram and Jambukeśvaram. Of the stylistic improvements made in these temples mention must be made of the torus moulding in the basement which is rounded and has a smooth surface, though in a few cases it is ornamented with vertical grooves or ribs. The *makaratōraṇas* become tall with narrow reverse curves on each side ; the *kumbhapañjaras* are also developed and carry on top over the abacus the superstructure of a *pañjara*. The *phalaka* in the pillars are thinner than those of earlier periods and the *padma* below it which is inverted and smooth in early temples have now petals. The pillars in the *maṇḍapas* have attached pilasters on their sides, known as *Āṇiyoṭṭikāl*.

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the temples of the late Cōḷa phase is the increased height of the *gōpuras*. The five storeyed *gōpuras* at Tiruveṇkāḍu, Uyyakoṇḍān-Tirumalai, Tiruccengāṭṭānguḍi and Kumbhakōṇam must belong to this phase. Besides the *gōpura* pillared *maṇḍapas* were also built with in the temple complex some of which were shaped in the form of a chariót by the addition of wheels and horses and elephants.

Generally speaking the characteristics of the early and late Cōḷa temples are shared by Pāṇḍya monuments of the respective periods, though minor variations are present in them. The next stage of development is, however, seen only in the temples built under the Vijayanagar rulers. The Vijayanagar kings not only built many new edifices, but made many additions to the already existing temples. Such additions are to be found in many places the most noteworthy among them being Kāñcipuram, Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, Chidambaram, Kumbhakōṇam, Madurai, Śrirangam, Vellore, etc. The *maṇḍapas* become large and conspicuous adjuncts during this period due to the multiplication and elaboration of religious rituals and ceremonial observances. The *Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa*, *Sopānamaṇḍapa*, *Davanamaṇḍapa*, *Snāpanamaṇḍapa*, *Alaṅkāramaṇḍapa*, etc., are the usual *maṇḍapas* in addition to the *ardha*, *mukha* and *mahā maṇḍapas* of earlier times. Some of these *maṇḍapas* are, however, not entirely unknown under the late Cōḷas. A few of them were built outside the temple circuit but not much away from it. These *maṇḍapas* are essentially pillared halls, open or closed, and contain either a shrine or a raised platform over a huge tortoise either in the centre or behind. They are also notable for their pillars which are rich in sculptural work and to which are attached riders on horse or lion or *yāli*. The fluted type of simple pillars becomes rare and huge and monolithic ones are often seen. They have ornamental brackets forming their capitals below each of which is a pendent. This pendent has been in many examples elaborated into a 'volute which terminates as an inverted lotus bud'.

The niches in the walls are not surmounted by *toraṇas* as in Pallava and Cōḷa temples but have a simple *pañjara* design over them. And what is more the niches are empty, without any image in them. Their

old functional character has been lost and they remain a simple ornamental design on the exterior of the wall.

The increase in the height of the *gōpuras* and in the number of *prākāras* is yet another feature. The *gōpuras* are generally seven-storeyed and are large and tall, especially in the Pāṇḍya region. The most typical *gōpuras* of this period are tobe found at Kāñcipuram, Śrīrangam, Chidambaram and Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. These are rich with architectural designs like *śālas*, *karṇakūṭas* and *alpanāsikas* rather than sculptural decoration.

The Vijayanagar mode of architecture was continued by the Nāyak rulers of Madurai. In the temples renovated or rebuilt by them as the ones at Madurai, Rāmeśvaram and Tirunelveli the corbels in the pillars show at their ends a plantain-flower like motif. The *gōpuras* continue to be slender and tall, the typical example being the Vaṭapatrasāyi gōpura at Śrīvilliputtūr which is eleven-storeyed. The corridors in these temples, unlike those of earlier periods, are provided with ceilings which are at times painted.

SCULPTURE

The art of sculpture like that of architecture has a continuous history in the Tamil country and during the course of its development it has, even within the limited geographical area of Tamilnad, shown more than one regional trait. As the advent of stone for purposes of art does not seem to antedate the beginning of the seventh century, t is likely that in the early centuries images were made of wood or stucco. In a few of the South Indian Temples the main deity in the *sanctum sanctorum* even today is made either in wood or in stucco and this probably is only a survival of the old practice. Due to their impermanent nature such images have not survived as a result of which it is not possible to trace the sculptural history of the region from the period of the Sangam classics in the light of extant examples.

It is in the early rock-cut caves of the Pallavas that one encounters for the first time earliest extant specimens of Tamilian stone carving. But even here, with the only exception of the Lalitāṅkura Pallaveśvaragriha at Tiruchirāppaḷḷi, the other rock-hewn caves of

Mahēndravarman I are devoid of much plastic decoration. Sculptures in these caves mostly consist of a pair of *dvārapālas* guarding the entrances and almost invariably leaning on their clubs; and a glance of their types in different caves would indicate the successful attempts made by the Pallava craftsmen in perfecting physiognomy. When compared with the simplicity and paucity of sculptures in the Mahēndra type of caves, the carving of many figures in the caves and monoliths of Narasimhavarman I and Paramesvaravarman I is striking.

Stylistically Pallava carvings are characterised by a naturalism in pose and an attenuated physiognomy. In fact the human figure is the pivot of Pallava sculptural art. In it the development of lines into cóntours and the manner in which the cóntours merge with the lines can be seen. By ignoring smaller anatomical details the Pallava craftsman have idealised and generalised human anatomy. A taller and somewhat oval-shaped face, double chin and flat nose are the major traits. Ornamental decorations and costumes are kept to the minimum. In a large number of specimens the *yajñōpavīta* is carried over the right arm though this is not a much dependable feature for purposes of dating. When the images represent deities they are endowed with their weapons and attributes which are either held by them naturally in hands or placed immediately above them.

The different iconographic types met with among the Pallava images indicate the prevalence of syncretistic trends during the period. The deities shown include Harihara, Ardhanāri, Trimūrti-Ekapada, Subrahmanya as Brahma-Sasta, etc., not to mention the different forms of Śiva and Viṣṇu. It is somewhat strange that Gaṇeśa makes his debut only in the structural temple of Rājasimha at Kāñcipuram, his images at Vallam and Mahābalipuram being probably only later additions. His cult, along with that of the Saptamātṛkas appears to be a Cāḷukyan derivative.

When the Pallavas were engaged in such a prolific sculptural activity in the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and in the regions immediately to the south of it the Pāṇḍyas in the extreme south were busy making their own contributions. Stylistically and in decorative details, in conception and in execution, the Pāṇḍya carvings are not much different

from the Pallava reliefs and appear to be just another edition of the Pallava art though in the realm of iconography it seems to strike a slightly different note. The provision of a *mṛdanga* instead of a *viṇā* for Viṇādhara Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the monolithic excavation at Kaḷugumalai and the decoration of Viṣṇu with *cannavīra* an ornament usually associated with goddess and minor gods only— at Kunnakkuḍi are instances in point.

With the revival of the Cōḷa empire under Vijayālaya and the building of numerous structural temples throughout the Tamil country, we enter upon a new era of sculptural activity. In some of the earliest Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya temples sculptural decoration is restricted and the value of plain space on walls is appreciated. But this was only a passing phase and the tendency to decorate niches and other parts of the shrine with radiant carvings asserted itself soon.

Sculpture under the Cōḷas is relieved of its architectonic context and it may even be said that it is " subsidiary to architecture ". The style may be characterised as " fluent " thanks to the continuous experience in the art of stone cutting from about 600 A.D. The striking attenuation of the Pallava period is replaced now by very subtle rhythmic quality and what is more Cōḷa sculptures are pleasingly delicate in outline. A flat upper torso, protuberance on the knees and a soft and supple form are some of the notable physiognomical characteristics shared by a large number of Cōḷa specimens.

The humanism and freedom of pose are the two significant features that elevate Cōḷa carvings to the status of great art. They are endowed with naturalistic and elaborate treatment of decorative details. While these details are suggested in Pallava images by soft lines which often merge in the modelling they are in bold and emphatic lines in the carvings of the period of Cōḷas. Mention should be made here of details like *kaṭisūtra*, *hāra*, *kanṭi*, etc., which are recognisably more pronounced in early Cōḷa images. Again it is sculptures of this period that of *skandamāla* (shoulder tassel) appears for the first time.

It is rather difficult to speak of the general characteristics of late Cōḷa sculptures as they display interesting variations in style and decorative details. More than one school of late Cōḷa sculpture appear

to have persisted, one preserving the classical traditions of the early period and the rest attempting to conventionalise in varying degrees in anticipation of grotesque stylisation that is to characterise the feature. The tendency to elaborate and "improve", a feature noticed in architecture, is extended to the decorative details of the images.

The composition is generally large and subordinate figures are seen within the niche unlike the early Cōḷa examples where they flank the *devakōṣṭa*. *Prabhā*- arch is noticed behind the head of the principal figures in many of the upper tier sculptures in temples. Generally the images are in bold relief though round ones are not wanting. Figures are shown frontally and profiles are rare. Some of the specimens of the period are poor in depth of conception and formal and weak in their presentation of themes. The torso becomes thick and squatty, unlike the elegant and natural shape of it in early Cōḷa sculptures. The under garment is invariably brought down below the knees and it encumbers the effect of the modelling of the limbs.

The decline and fall of the Cōḷa empire had inevitable impact on the art of the Tamil country as it amounted to the withdrawal of a powerful patronising agency. However, the rise of the Vijayanagar rulers farther north and their eventual supremacy over Tamilnad were welcome phenomena with the resultant encouragement to various arts. The sculptural art of the Vijayanagar period commands one's attention not so much for its æsthetic qualities as fór its prodigious output and the diverse themes it chose to represent. The sculptures are formal and rigid and lack the naturalness and softness of earlier periods. The post is stiff and face becomes expressionless. The nose becomes pointed and the cheeks are vertically grooved. The elaboration of draperies, ornaments and other decorative devices, started during the late Cōḷa period, is continued now with greater vigour. *Tilak*, the mark on the forehead, not found in early periods, makes its debut in Vijayanagar carvings.

Thematically a very significant introduction of the period is the Ganga-Yamuna motif. This relates to two female figures in bold relief on both sides of the entrance under the *gopura* of the temple, one of the representing the river goddess Ganga and the other Yamuna,

both on their *vāhanas*. From the mouth of the *vāhana* rises a thick plant, comes round the figure and rises above with involute circles in which are sculptural reliefs of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. This practice of representing the river goddesses at the entrances was in vogue in North India from the Gupta period onwards but was introduced in the south only under the Vijayanagara rulers.

This account will not be complete with out atleast a brief sketch of the art of bronze casting for which the Tamil country was famous. Metal images have been cast throughout the centuries under the patronage of different dynasties in the north, south, east and west but nowhere does it seem to have registered such an acme of development as it did under the Cōḷas. A few Agamic texts and the contemporary practice among the *sthapatis* indicate two modes of casting icons—the hallow and the solid methods. The figure of a female, identified as Mother Goddess and discovered at Ādichanallūr is the oldest extant metal icon in the Tamil country. It is small in size and has been taken to be at least 3,000 years old. A few Buddhist metal icons discovered at Amarāvati and Kāverippūmpaṭiṇam and Buddhapad in āndhradeśa and assignable to the early centuries of the Christian era reveal that the metallic art was already flourishing in South India.

These traditions of the early period in the realm of art were continued by the Pallavas who held hegemony over parts of the southern Andhradesa and the whole of the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam and even the region upto the Kāvēri in the south. A few scholars tend to believe that the art of bronze casting was either unknown to the Pallavas or at least had not attained great heights under them and that for all practical purposes the history of the art of bronzes in Tamilnad begins with the Cōḷas. Now it is difficult to wholly accept this as we know for certain that this art was flourishing under the Sātavāhanas and Ikshvākus and hence the Pallavas might also have been aware of it. Considering the fact that under the early Cōḷas the output of metal icons was prodigious in quantity and unparalled in quality it is difficult to assume that this art had developed to that extent within a short time after its introduction in the Tamil country. Of particular interest in this connection is an inscription of a certain Abhimāna Siddhi (who seems

to be either a contemporary of or a ruler anterior to Dantivarman Pallavamalla) in the Vaikunṭhapperumāḷ temple at Kānchipuram making reference to the gift of one thousand *pon* (gold) obviously for the making of a golden plate for offering *bali* and also for a *paḍimam*. The *paḍimam* here could only mean an image made out of the gifted gold and hence a metal icon. Apart from some of the Pallava characteristics revealed by a few bronzes this inscription would show that metal art was not unknown to the Pallavas. A Tripurantaka in a private collection now in Ahmedabad, a Vishapaharana from Kilappudanur in the Tanjore district, a Naṭarāja from Nallur in the same district are a few of the cions with obvious Pallava features and noted for graceful and simple modelling. A Maitreya from Melaiyur and a Viṣṇu in the Trivandrum Museum may also be included in this list.

A large number of specimens belong to the period of transition from the Pallava to the Cōḷa period and the first two or three decades of the Chola period. This is the period which witnessed the highest water mark in the art of bronze casting and in the light of recent and penetrating studies it is possible to discern different phases in sequence in the development of the art.

The Viṣṇu from Tiruchcherai, Chaṇḍikeśvara from Tiruveṇkāḍu, Kirata and Arjuna from Tiruvetkalam are the most representative of the flowering phase of the early Cōḷa period. In modelling treatment they offer valuable links between earlier images and the clearly datable icons of the subsequent period. The *skandhamala* (shoulder tassel) which is not generally noticed in images of the Pallava period is invariably seen in Cola bronzes. Similar and interesting changes are found in many ornaments and decorative devices including armlets, *udarabandha*, necklace, *katisutra*, loops and tassels, etc. The shape of the *yajñopavita* i.e., its running over the right arm is continued in few images but it ceases to be a dependable stylistic feature in the Cōḷa period.

Stylistic characteristics, useful as they are for any chronological classification of images, are not always useful and at times even prove to be deceptive on account of the persistence of certain modes for quite a long time. It is in this connection that a few inscriptions

prove to be useful affording exact dates in which the icons were cast and endowed and thereby enabling one to study the features of dated bronzes and compare them with images with identical features to arrive at their probable dates. Quite a number of well known and masterly examples of the Cōḷa bronzes have now been dated with as much accuracy as possible.

Numerous are the inscriptions making mention of the dedication of bronze images to temples under successive rulers but unfortunately not all of them have survived. Special mention must be made of the references to a host of deities in metal in the Tanjore inscriptions of Rājarāja of which none with possibly the single exception of a Tripurāntaka is still extant. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of a few dated bronzes as they indicate art forms and norms of the periods of their making and show how stylistic features are not always wholly trustworthy. Of the many superlative icons in the Umāmaheśvara temple at Konerirajapuram, Tanjore District, a Vṛshabhavāhana Tripurāntaka and Gaṇapati are datable between 959 A.D. and 977 A.D. on the authority of an inscription in the same temple. The reference to gifts to an image of Kūttaperumāḷ and his consort in the Vriddhagiriśvara temple at Vriddhachalam by Sembiyan Mahādēvi in an inscription in that temple reveals that the now extant images of Naṭarāja and consort there were made in or before 981 A.D.

Of the many bronzes unearthed at Tiruveṇkāḍu in the Tanjore district a Vṛshabhavāhana was dedicated in 1011 A.D. and his consort in 1012 A.D. and the characteristics of these succinctly illustrate the bronze style during the last years of Rājarāja I. An inscription of the same ruler dated in his 28th year refers gifts to an image of Āḍavallār (Naṭarāja) which may be a reference to either of the two figures of the god in the temple; obviously this was dedicated in 1013 A.D. Another epigraph speaks of the dedication of Bhikshatana in the 30th year of Rājādhirāja I corresponding to 1048 A.D. while yet another inscription reveals that an Ardhanāṛiśvara was endowed in or before 1047 A.D. That other undated Tiruveṇkāḍu bronzes like the Bhairava and Kalyāṇasundara should also belong to about the same period is apparent. All these icons admirably reflect the heavy and stolid forms of contemporary stone sculpture.

Generally speaking the bronze icons reflect the form and style of contemporary sculpture in stone. This is true also of iconography and decorative details. The Naṭarāja image which is rare in Pallava times (found only in the Siyamangalam cave, Dharmaraja ratha at Mahabalipuram, Kailasanatha, Muktisvara and Matangesvara temples at Kanchipuram) is frequently represented in the Cōḷa period. It is in the beginning of the early Chola period that the Ānandatāṇḍava mode of dance gets crystalized and is shown alike in stone and metal. In the representation of this and other themes and in general execution and details minor albeit interesting variations are found between the specimens wrought in the metropolitan art centres in the Chōḷamaṇḍalam and the products in the other peripheral regions like the Pāṇḍya and Kongu countries. The reversed posture of Naṭarāja in the Pāṇḍya realm, known as *mārukāl tandavam*, is particularly interesting.

The metal art was zealously patronised during the later Chōḷa and Vijayanagar periods as well ; but examples of these periods, like contemporary stone carvings, are devoid of life. They are much conventionalised and the dynamic and rhythmic movement characteristic of early examples is now replaced by mathematical shematism.

A. 2 Hoe & Co., Madras-1.